

DCFS Weekly Update From the State Office

Friday, March 30, 2001

Meeting with our Attorney General Partners

By Richard Anderson

A recent meeting with the Assistant Attorneys General made it very clear again to me the importance of people getting together to strengthen good partnerships. It is obvious we have common goals and concerns. I realized how important it is to use appropriate and accurate concepts and even key words in expressing our understanding, or lack of understanding, about each other's work. For us, it is important to make sure that we provide the kind of information that is needed for our legal representatives to fully do their job. This information is most often called "evidence." Also for us, we need to have their understanding of the importance of the tools of relationship building to do our work; we now call this "engaging." It was most gratifying during the meeting to have the attorneys advocate for changes that will better support our frontline jobs. For example, they asked that we not require a service plan prior to adjudication in a situation where the family has not agreed to cooperate (this is a policy issue to be submitted to the Board). They also offered to be available to be contacted when they have had previous experience with someone who reenters the system. This offer was in reference to our discussion of the importance of obtaining a good understanding of what the family has experienced prior to our current involvement. They also advocated for resource books for our staff that would provide better access to the services for families.

The distance we sometimes experience between our legal partners and us in our day-to-day work may partly be a misunderstanding of the requirements of each other's professions. Learning these distinctions will make our professional relationships work for the children, families, and each other. This type of understanding is an indicator of a strong child welfare system of care.

Kudos!

By Linda Wininger

In the bi-annual recommendations to the Division from the Child Fatality Review several of our workers were issued commendations for excellent work. They are as follows:

- CPS Investigators Rhett Fronk and Jennifer Ramierez, to be commended for their excellent casework.
- CPS Caseworker John Gooch, to be commended for his investigation and especially his coordination with the In-Home caseworker, with the PCMC Child Protection Team, and with the family's doctor.
- In-Home Caseworker Nancy Lords, to be commended for her follow-up on the CPS investigation, her coordination with the CPS worker in working with the PCMC Child Protection Team, and her extensive coordination of community services for the family.

Each of these workers will receive eight hours of administrative leave from Katy Larsen, their Region Director. Hurrah for good work!!

By the way, we would like to recognize good work in the Weekly Update. Send information about caseworkers or other DCFS workers who are doing good work to Carol Miller or me and we'll put it in the Update!

Reminder

If a client refuses to sign a service plan (or any other document) be sure that you document the refusal in your activity logs.

Foster Care Foundation Morale Boost

By Richard Anderson

We had a great morale boost from the Foster Care Foundation this past month. They brought cookies to the offices and provided key chains to our staff. This recognition is much appreciated. The Foundation is a great example of partnership. We have partners who continually let us know of the respect they have for the difficulty of our work. These tokens of appreciation go a long way in keeping the energy up where it needs to be. In each office area, let's look for opportunities to provide the same kind of support for those who we see needing this kind of recognition and uplift. We can then pass along the kind of good will and good feelings that the Foster Care Foundation brings to us.

Indian Child Welfare Act Conference - April 4

By Richard Anderson

This Wednesday we will be having the first ever Indian Child Welfare Conference in our state. The objective of this meeting is to help us ensure that the Indian Child Welfare Act is fully implemented. Realizing that everyone cannot attend this event, I would ask that each of you read the Act and become familiar with our responsibilities in the Act. A copy of the Act and the 1999 Amendments to the Act are located at www.nicwa.org/policy/theact.htm (plan on reading 11 pages). This is surely one document that must be followed, not only to be in accordance with federal law but also to be culturally responsive. Supervisors, or others who attend the conference, please share with your unit what you learn from the conference.

Declining CPS Priority Response Rates

By Navina Forsythe and Scott Goodell

The percent of Priority 1 CPS referrals where the child was seen on time has declined by 11% over the past year. The quarterly information for January-March 2000 indicated a 96% success rate. The quarterly information for January-March 2001 indicates an 85% success rate. Last year the information analysts for each region went through each Priority 1 CPS report in an attempt to determine if the child first seen date was entered correctly in SAFE. It was found that in many cases it was not. Frequently an on-call worker would see the child but the date entered was when the regular worker saw the child. Please be careful to enter this date accurately.

To meet priority time frames the caseworker shall have face-to-face contact with an alleged victim that drives the priority. The purpose of the face-to-face contact is to

assess immediate protection and safety needs for the child and conduct an initial assessment of the family's capacity to protect the child. Face-to-face contact doesn't necessarily include the interview. The face-to-face contact is the earliest contact made by any DCFS caseworker (on-call or assigned). During regular business hours this would be the first contact the worker has with an alleged victim. If an on-call worker has met with the alleged victim their meeting would count and would complete the face-to-face contact requirement. The day and time the caseworker makes the face-to-face contact needs to be documented in SAFE in Activity Recording. Many times the caseworker will be entering the information after the face-to-face contact occurred, so when the child first seen date is being entered the caseworker needs to remember to put the date and time the face-to-face contact actually occurred.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

By Richard Anderson

Our division is most often involved in secondary and tertiary child abuse prevention. We have great community partners who provide the community with the primary prevention tools. Thanks to these partners we have an ever-lessening of trauma to children and more successful parenting. The national statistics show an 11% decrease in child abuse and an even greater decrease in child sexual abuse. I read a recent article that said, "programming to prevent child sexual abuse is 'virtually synonymous with group-based instruction for children on personal safety'" [What Works in Child Welfare, CWLA Press, 2000]. We have this type of prevention effort provided by our prevention partners. As always, there are various factors involved in these decreases, but we hope the statistics are accurate. The work of the prevention programs must be placed at the top of the reasons for such an impact. Some of you work in these programs and, in some instances, you volunteer in these efforts. Thanks to those of you who provide these resources. We also need to take time this month to thank those of our community partners who work in the primary prevention programs.

To Make Your Life Easier...Using SAFE Optimally

By Robert Lewis

Progress in Reducing Action Items Overdue 30 Days or More

Last October, we published statistics on the regions and offices that were keeping the number of overdue action items at a low level. We have rerun that data as of March 6, 2001, to be able to see if there is more progress. And the figures clearly show that progress is occurring.

The statewide rate of 30-day overdue items per 100 cases is now 5.2 items, down from 7.5, a reduction of over 30%. The rate for 10-day overdue items has been reduced at an even greater rate (down from 16.0 to 7.5, a reduction of over 50%). It seems noteworthy that in the five months' time, we have reduced our 10-day overdue rate to that of the former level for 30-day overdue items.

In the October review, 11 offices were perfect in having no action items overdue 30 days or more. Now there are 14. In October, Western Region was applauded for being under 3%. Now Northern Region has joined Western at that level.

Here are the regions and offices with 30-day overdue rates of 3% or less, as of March 6, 2001. Good work!!

No Action Items overdue 30 days or more:	Cedar City, Price, Castle Dale, Heber, Kanab, Nephi, Beaver, Park City, Monticello, Panguich, *Richfield, *Bountiful, *Brigham City, *Logan
1% or less:	Manti, Payson
2% or less:	Tooele, Richfield, *Blanding, *Clearfield, *Murray, Provo
3% or less:	Western Region, *Northern Region, Roosevelt, Murray, Fillmore, *Glendale

*New this report

Here are offices with rates of 20 or more 30-day overdues per 100 cases: West Jordan (26.4%), Vernal (24.1%), Kearns (22.8%), St. George (20.0%). The SAFE team would be happy to problem-solve these numbers with you, to see what might be done to help.

For general comments, suggestions, or questions about the weekly updates, e-mail Carol Miller or call 801-538-4451.

For questions about policy or rules, e-mail Steve Bradford or call 801-538-8210.

For questions about SAFE, call the SAFE Help Desk at 801-538-4141.